

RTAMM 2081

Chapter 2081: 'Capabilities'

Zhu Chengqi had neither a son nor a daughter to inherit his assets, after all.

Since he had no chance of ever passing anything down to his children, he would have to hand them over to an outsider. That would depend entirely on Zhu Chengqi's mood.

Although Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan wanted to meet Zhu Chengqi purely out of concern for him, others had spun tall tales regarding this matter.

Thinking back to what Miao Jing had said earlier, Zhu Chengqi and Qiao Nan immediately realized what Miao Jing was worried and upset about. Those people thought that the Zhai couple was trying to suck up to Zhu Chengqi so that they would stand to gain from Zhu Chengqi's death.

It did indeed sound awful. It was wrong no matter who did it. The problem was that neither Zhai Sheng nor Qiao Nan had ever intended to do so and yet, that was how other people were viewing them. How unjustified it was for them!

If an average person were to encounter such a situation where his good intentions were mistaken, it was only natural for him to put away his good intentions so that others would no longer spread rumors about himself..

But if Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan were to do just that, they would have helped someone achieve his goal. There was no way they would agree to that, especially Qiao Nan. It was especially because

she had encountered such a situation that she had to press on. If she was so easily wavered by these rumors, there would truly be no one sincere toward Zhu Chengqi by his side.

Thinking about how Zhu Chengqi had been silently taking care of her all these years and how he had been the only one trying to help her even as her closest kin continued pressuring her for money, Qiao Nan was even more persistent not to give up on this friendly old man.

Qiao Nan looked at Zhai Sheng. They remained silent but the same thought formed in both of their minds. There was only one name that came up when they thought about who could have started this rumor: Wang Yang.

Only Wang Yang would be so concerned about the Zhu family's assets and only Wang Yang understood just how much of a danger Qiao Nan was to him. Others knew about Zhai Sheng and the Zhai family's situation. As such, there was no way they would have started such a ridiculous rumor about the couple.

Even without the Zhu family's assets, Zhai Sheng and the Zhai family were already doing well enough.

Even though Zhai Sheng had no descendants for the time being, there had already been three generations of chiefs in the Zhai family. It was evident that they were much more capable than the Zhu family that only had two generations of chiefs. Whether one thought about it from Zhu Chengqi's perspective or Zhai Sheng's perspective, such a rumor was ridiculous all the same.

There was no need for Zhai Sheng to go after anything that the Zhu family had. After all, the Zhai family had whatever the Zhu family had. In fact, the Zhu family might not even have some things that the Zhai family had. Even if Zhai Sheng did not have it at the moment, there was nothing out of his reach with some hard work.

Besides, Zhu Chengqi was no fool. There was no way he would hand over two generations' worth of the Zhu family's hard work over to an outsider like Zhai Sheng. As such, no one would have managed to guess that the true reason for such an absurd rumor was Qiao Nan, who was stuck between Zhai Sheng and Zhu Chengqi.

Because of Qiao Nan's existence, Wang Yang had no other choice but to resort to such means. He had already taken nine hundred and ninety-nine steps of the way and was just one step short of success. There was no way he would allow himself to be tripped up by Qiao Nan at this critical moment and lose his chance of reaching his ultimate goal.

Now that the couple had their suspicions, there was no way Wang Yang was going to get his way. Thinking again about how she had lost a good younger brother, Zhu Baoguo, because of Wang Yang, Qiao Nan harbored a deep hatred for Wang Yang. Even after finding out that Wang Yang had been the one who had arranged for Chen Jun to seduce her to disappoint Zhu Chengqi, Qiao Nan had not hated Wang Yang. But she could not take Zhu Baoguo's death lying down. She would never be able to forgive herself otherwise.

Since Wang Yang cared so much about the Zhu family's assets, she would make trouble for him, scare him, and cause him to lose everything that he had been working for all these years. Qiao Nan had not thought up a comprehensive plan as of yet. After all, Zhu Chengqi had the final say over who was to inherit the Zhu family's assets. It was true that she had no blood ties with Zhu Chengqi. As such, there was nothing wrong with Zhu Chengqi wanting to hand everything over to Wang Yang.

And it was not as though Qiao Nan could directly tell Zhu Chengqi that it was Wang Yang who had hired those hooligans and caused Zhu Baoguo's death. Qiao Nan was worried that the truth might be too much for Zhu Chengqi, who already did not have many days left to live, to handle.

But the more Wang Yang did, the more stubborn Qiao Nan got about not letting Wang Yang get his way. She would find a way to solve the Zhu family's problems. In short, she would much rather donate everything that should have belonged to Zhu Baoguo to the less fortunate than let it fall in the hands of someone like Wang Yang.

“Don’t worry too much about Wang Yang. I can handle it.” Zhai Sheng could sense Qiao Nan’s hatred toward Wang Yang. Of course, based just on Chen Jun’s matter, Zhai Sheng could fully understand why Qiao Nan hated Wang Yang so much. Even if Qiao Nan did not mention it, there was no way Zhai Sheng would let the matter slide after someone had bullied his wife.

Besides, Wang Yang had already sent himself to his doorstep. If he were to do nothing, he would never be able to call himself a Zhai again.

Because of Zhai Sheng’s assurance, Qiao Nan naturally allowed Zhai Sheng to handle Wang Yang’s matter. Compared to Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan knew her abilities as a pregnant woman.

Qiao Nan was already quite advanced in age as a pregnant woman, and as such, she had no choice but to cut down on the number of courses she took to slow down her hectic schedule. The English examination was the only activity that Qiao Nan had not given up.

Compared to everything else, English was the only subject that she excelled in without much effort.

Zhai Sheng’s and Qiao Nan’s lives seemed to be on the rise and the atmosphere in the Zhai family was better than ever before. There were many people in the capital who knew that Zhai Sheng had gotten married a little later in life but was rather ‘capable’, having gotten his wife pregnant in mere months. The Zhai family would get bigger very soon.

This news inevitably spread to Shi Qing as well.

Chapter 2082: Bitter

Amongst everyone, Feng Cheng was the most disappointed upon learning that Zhai Sheng had gotten married and was even expecting a child. She had even thought that her daughter finally stood

a chance since Zhai Sheng had been unwilling to get back together with Qiu Chenxi all these years, especially since her daughter was so persistent.

Who would have known that Zhai Sheng would have gotten married and was now even expecting a child even before she had even visited the Zhai family? It was such a pity. If she had known that this would be the case, she would have gone to visit the Zhai family earlier. Perhaps, she would even have found a reason to return to Ping Cheng, giving the excuse that she missed Old Shi. That way, she would have been able to get closer to the Zhai family.

“Mom.” Shi Qing, who had just returned home, said hello to Feng Cheng before returning to her room to have a change of clothes.

Feng Cheng’s expression was downcast at the dinner table. “Qing Qing, Zhai Sheng’s wife is pregnant. You...” Qing Qing had probably not given up on Zhai Sheng yet. Before Zhai Sheng had gotten remarried, she would have agreed to her daughter getting married to Zhai Sheng, even though it would be Zhai Sheng’s second marriage..

But the situation was different now that Zhai Sheng was married and his wife was pregnant. If Qing Qing were to interfere at this time, Old Shi would never have agreed to it if he were around and would even give Qing Qing a good lecture and beating. Although she was not capable of doing so, she would not support Qing Qing doing something like that either. “Qing Qing, don’t you love the military a lot? It hasn’t been easy for you to reach the position you’re in today. Don’t do anything silly.”

Because Zhai Sheng was a soldier, his marriage had been a military marriage that was protected by the military. If Qing Qing lost all self-control and did anything immoral, her years of effort and hard work would go to waste. “Think about it... The Feng family always praises you on the surface but I know what they truly think about you. They’re probably waiting for you to fall from grace one day. Qing Qing, don’t do anything silly.”

Feng Cheng could not bear to let Shi Qing build a career in the military. If given a choice, she would much rather her daughter have a normal desk job. Perhaps it was because her daughter had spent too much time in the military that her temper had grown worse and would refuse to give in to anyone.

How many men in the world would truly love such a strong woman and be willing to marry her?

If she were to change her career path and tone down her temper, she might very well get married!

But Feng Cheng's tone changed at the mention of her family. Yes, Qing Qing was no longer young and she herself was full of white hair. But that did not mean that she was an old foggy.

In fact, Feng Cheng even felt as though she was much shrewder now. She had seen clearly what her family was like. After Feng Cheng had tried to play Shi Qing like a playing piece, completely ignoring Shi Qing's happiness, Feng Cheng had severed all ties with her family.

Initially, the Feng family had been taking care of Shi Qing and Feng Cheng because they felt that others would think that the Feng family was bullying a widow and orphan if they were to leave them in the lurch. But since the mother and daughter pair refused to follow the Feng family's arrangements, neither would they care about Shi Qing or Feng Cheng anymore.

Once the mother and daughter lost the protection of the Feng family and realized how difficult it was to survive in the world, they would naturally return to the Feng family and listen obediently to them.

As such, the Feng family not only stopped helping Shi Qing and Feng Cheng but they also tried to pressure the two of them into admitting their defeat and bowing down to them.

It was then that Shi Qing had suddenly decided to enlist in the military. Even though the Shi family did not have much savings, Shi Qing handed all of her monthly allowances over to Feng Cheng. Of course, there was no way Feng Cheng could have lived a luxurious life as she had in the past, but it was not difficult to survive in a city like the capital with that sum of money.

When Old Shi had been around, he had left everything that belonged to the Shi family to Qiu Chenxi because his son had passed away early and his granddaughter, Qiu Chenxi, had gotten married to Zhai Sheng. This meant that Feng Cheng and Shi Qing had been left with practically nothing.

Thankfully, Feng Cheng had a good husband and Shi Qing had a good father. Shi Peng had bought a quad in the capital behind Feng Cheng's back. Because he had purchased it very early on, the prices were not as high as they were now.

Not only Feng Cheng and Shi Qing but even Old Master Shi and the Feng family were in the dark about the existence of the quad.

When all of the Shi family's assets became Qiu Chenxi and the Feng family refused to help Shi Qing and Feng Cheng, a lawyer came to their doorstep. Not only did that lawyer hand over the property deed of the quad to the mother and daughter, but he even handed over cash that had been accumulated from the rental income of the quad over the past few years.

As the property prices skyrocketed over the years, the rental income from the quad had far exceeded the amount that Shi Peng had paid for the quad in the first place. This sum of money was like a light in the darkness to the mother and daughter and gave them the will to live once more.

It was only because of this sum of money that Shi Qing had dared to enter the military.

The Feng family had always been holding their breath, waiting to see how miserable Feng Cheng and Shi Qing would be. However, not only were they not miserable, but they were, in fact, doing very well. Gradually, Shi Qing had shown off her prowess in the military and had even achieved remarkable results.

No one else knew why Shi Qing had performed so outstandingly other than Shi Qing herself. After Shi Peng passed away, Shi Qing had lost contact with Zhai Sheng. Even as her paternal grandpa's family left them in the lurch and her maternal grandma's family tried to bully them into suppression, Zhai Sheng had been the one supporting her silently and creating opportunities for her even though he did not physically turn up.

It could be said that Shi Qing owed much of her success to Zhai Sheng.

After Shi Qing made a name for herself, the Feng family suddenly changed their stance. However, Feng Cheng had already given up on her family by then. Before Qing Qing had achieved anything in the military, not only had her family refused to help them, but they had even bullied them. Now that Qing Qing was capable, her family was trying to take credit for having raised Qing Qing well.

Feng Cheng had never insulted her family, but she was adamant that she would maintain her distance from them and would never get close to them again.

They had managed to pull through the hardest times after much difficulty. There was no way she was going to let her family ride on her laurels after they had left her and Shi Qing in the lurch at her darkest times.

The Feng family had gone so overboard at that time that Feng Cheng could not help but use the Feng family as a negative example while trying to advise Shi Qing.

Chapter 2083: Dreaming

Shi Qing was amused by her mom's words. "Mom, you mean that you know what the Feng family thinks of me too?"

Her grandpa and grandma had passed away a long time ago, but her eldest uncle, second uncle, and their families were all still around. On the surface, the Feng family always praised Shi Qing, saying that she was the most promising child in her generation. Although her uncles both had sons, there was not one of them who could match up to Shi Qing.

Behind her back, however, the Feng family had been sour about Shi Qing being unwilling to get close to the Feng family, not even wanting to help her uncle's sons, causing them to lose out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The Feng family even mocked Shi Qing, laughing that she had been a soldier for so long that she had no feminine touch to her. That was why she did not even have a boyfriend at the age of forty, much less being married.

There was no way that tomboy Shi Qing would ever get married in this lifetime!

Since there was no one else left in the Shi family, the Feng family was Shi Qing's closest kin. It did not matter if Shi Qing did not want to help them now. Once Shi Qing died, their descendants would still inherit all of Shi Qing's assets anyway.

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Yes, the Feng family had the exact same thoughts as Wang Yang and they were all certain that they would stand to gain from Shi Qing's death since she would never get married or have any children to inherit her assets.

"Oh right, Mom. It's indeed better for me to have a child at my age. Do you want a girl or a boy?" Since Brother Zhai was already going to become a father, it was only right for her to change her status and become a mother as well.

"A girl or a boy? Have you finally come to your senses and decided to get married? Aiya, I have no preferences for any gender. As long as you're willing to get married, I'll love your child all the

same.” She had waited and longed for that child for such a long time. Would she still be picky about it?

After finishing her meal and drinking her tea, Shi Qing smiled and replied. “Mom, you’re overthinking it. I never said that I was going to get married, much less give birth to a child. I’m thinking of adopting a child. That’s why I asked if you’d prefer a girl or a boy. Mom, if I really adopt a child, you’d better not treat that child badly just because I didn’t give birth to him or her. Given my situation, I think it’ll be better for you to take care of the child in the beginning stages.”

She was not like Brother Zhai, who could get married when he wanted to and have a child when he wanted to. Brother Zhai had good fortune and had met someone whom he was willing to change for the better for. Unfortunately, she had not had such good fortune. At the very least, the thought of adopting a child had come before she had met a man whom she thought was suitable for marriage or even as a father to her child.

Feng Cheng was in a dilemma. “I want a child that’s yours.” She was afraid that she would not get close to a child that was not Shi Qing’s biological child.

“Mom, think about how difficult it’s been for me to get to where I am today. I can’t even remember how many times I’ve visited the hospital. To be honest, no one can be sure of whether I can still have children in my state even if I were to get married. Mom, have you forgotten that I was shot here?” Shi Qing touched her stomach. The scar from the surgery to remove the bullet was still there.

“This...” The doctor had not said for certain that she would be unable to get pregnant either. If there was even a sliver of chance, Feng Cheng had no intention of giving up.

Shi Qing handed Feng Cheng a cup of warm tea. “Mom, what era are we living in? You should be more open-minded. Besides, there are children of all ages up for adoption. I’ll try my best to adopt a younger one. Why don’t I adopt one that hasn’t been weaned? The ones who raise a child are more important than the ones who give birth to them. You’re just afraid that I don’t have anyone by my side once you pass away. With this child around, you won’t have to worry about that. Besides, once I have a child, the Feng family would probably tone down their nonsense.”

In short, the people Shi Qing hated the most were still the Feng family.

At the mention of the Feng family, Feng Cheng was at a loss of words. She thought about how her nephew had dared to cause such huge trouble outside at such a tender age. His auntie was a female general and was doing well for herself. Since his auntie had no children of her own, everything that

belonged to her would eventually be passed down to him. If anyone dared to offend him or tattle on him, he would get his auntie to deal with them.

Just listen to that!

The Feng family had raised their next generation wayward. They even dared to spout such nonsense!

It was not enough that he had gotten into trouble, but he was even trying to drag Qing Qing down with him! After that incident, her brother and sister-in-law had even said that their son was still young and insensible and that he had only been joking and had not meant what he had said.

Nonsense! Did they still think that she was that innocent and gullible Feng Cheng of the past?

If the Feng family did not have such ideas and say such things in front of their children, they would never have dared to express such thoughts even if they did think this way inwardly. Besides, he was already eighteen and possessed his own identity card. Was he still a child? Was he a giant baby?

Faced with the fact that the Feng family regarded Shi Qing's assets as their own, even creating trouble for Shi Qing from time to time, Feng Cheng was frustrated too and was no longer willing to entertain the Feng family.

Although the Feng family had thought through their plan carefully, things had not gone as planned because of Shi Qing and Feng Cheng's attitudes. After all, everything depended on Shi Qing's cooperation and whether Shi Qing was willing to acknowledge the Feng family as her relatives.

Shi Qing remained single up until now and did not even have a boyfriend! Although the Feng family was upset over the matter, they tried to comfort themselves. They were one generation above Shi Qing and could not enjoy the good fortune of having a female general as their niece. Their sons were of the same generation as Shi Qing and were Shi Qing's elder brothers. Unfortunately, their sons faced the same fate as them and could not experience the glory of having a female general as their younger cousin.

Fortunately, their sons were married and even had sons of their own, who were Shi Qing's juniors. Their grandsons were still young and would outlive Shi Qing. Once Shi Qing passed on, and without anyone else to inherit her assets, the Feng family would naturally be the ones who would be most eligible to inherit them.

In short, their grandson could just wait it out. Once Shi Qing passed away, the Feng family would rise to glory.

Knowing that the Feng family had such plans, Shi Qing was both amused and angered. Then, she immediately found a lawyer to write a will. If she were to pass away, all of her assets would be donated to the less fortunate, especially those living in old folks' homes.

The Feng family could dream on about taking advantage of her!

Chapter 2084: A Taste

She had made her will, but after hearing about Qiao Nan being pregnant, Shi Qing had the idea of adopting a child instead. If she found someone to handle the matter right away, she would become a mom even earlier than Qiao Nan, and her child would even be older than Zhai Sheng's.

With that thought, Shi Qing could no longer sit still. "Mom, sit here and watch the television for a while. I'll go make a call and see if there are any children who fit my requirements up for adoption." Since she wanted to adopt a child, she would rather adopt one who was younger so that she could experience everything that other mothers experienced, apart from being pregnant for ten months.

Seeing her daughter so fiery and impulsive, Feng Cheng had the urge to stop her daughter but did not say anything in the end. Forget it. She would simply let Qing Qing do whatever she pleased. Qing Qing was right. She was simply afraid that Qing Qing would not have anyone by her side after she passed away. As long as Qing Qing was happy, adopting a child was no big deal, after all.

Most importantly, after Qing Qing had a child, the Feng family would never dare to say such embarrassing and awful things again. One day, if Qing Qing were to have a reunion with her and Old Shi, there would still be a child to inherit Qing Qing's assets. The Feng family would never even get a single cent from them.

Shi Qing and Zhai Sheng were known in the capital for being unmarried and single at such an old age. After Zhai Sheng got married and was expecting a child, Shi Qing followed suit and adopted an infant. What followed was also considered to be news in the capital.

Now that the Zhai family's daughter-in-law had become pregnant, there would be someone to inherit the Zhai family's assets. Many were betting on whether the child in the Zhai family's daughter-in-law's stomach was a girl or a boy. If it was a girl and if the girl were not to be anything

like Shi Qing, the legacy of the Zhai family being chiefs would end at three generations. There would be no possibility of there being a fourth chief in the Zhai family. Of course, if it was a boy and the Zhai family was unable to educate the child well, the Zhai family's reputation might very well be ruined at that generation as well.

In short, not having a child was a problem, but having a child might not be good news to the family either.

There had not even been a result to the bet on the Zhai family's matter before the news of Shi Qing adopting an unweaned infant spread through the capital. Upon finding out that Shi Qing had adopted a female infant, many people thought that Shi Qing intended to raise a daughter just like her.

Of course, this matter had only become the talk in the circle because of the Feng family. Many had heard about what the Feng family had done to Shi Qing and her mother at that time. These people looked down on the Feng family but did not go out of their way to embarrass them.

Who would have known that the Feng family would kick up such a big fuss following the appearance of this female infant? It was the Shi family's business that Shi Qing adopted a child. It had nothing to do with the Feng family at all. The most ridiculous thing was that the Feng family acted as though the child would spend the Feng family's money in the future instead of Shi Qing's money. As such, they were infuriated and tried to stand in the way of Shi Qing going through with the adoption, even scolding Shi Qing for being a fool and Feng Cheng for allowing her daughter to do such a crazy and foolish thing.

Ha! They were a bunch of shameless fools who had no self-awareness at all. What was going on in the Feng family's minds?

The way they saw it, it was better for Shi Qing to raise that baby girl well. At the very least, no matter how bad that girl turned out in the future, she would never be as despicable as the Feng family.

After Qiao Nan heard about the matter, she naturally took Shi Qing's side and supported her. In both her dream and in reality, the Feng family was nothing more than annoyances to her. To tell the truth, the Feng family was not much different from the Qiao family.

"That's the taste!" After Qiao Nan received the pickles that Qiao Dongliang had sent over, she could not help but salivate after just one taste of it. "Auntie, could you make me some congee? I'm

hungry.” Qiao Nan could not be certain whether she was truly hungry or whether her appetite had been whet by the pickles. That did not matter. All she knew was that she wanted to eat right now.

“Alright.” The auntie got down to work without any hesitation. It was a good thing for pregnant women to have big appetites. Now, Qiao Nan was eating for two. It would be terrible if she did not nourish herself enough now that the baby was growing so quickly. The auntie was only worried when Qiao Nan refused to eat. She was not at all worried when Qiao Nan requested something from her.

Zhai Sheng took a quick whiff. It was sour. Terribly sour. Just the smell alone made Zhai Sheng feel nauseous. He dared not even think about how the pickles would taste if he were to take a bite. Zhai Sheng did not like sweet or salty foods. The sight of all those pickles made Zhai Sheng lose his appetite.

Besides, this was what Qiao Nan wanted to eat. Even if he loved eating them, there was no way he would fight with his pregnant wife to have a taste of it.

“Brother Zhai, do you want to have a taste?” Qiao Nan picked up her chopsticks. Her congee had not yet been served, but she picked up a piece of the pickles for herself to taste. That spicy and sour taste pleased Qiao Nan greatly. Because she loved eating it, Qiao Nan could not wait to share her joy with Zhai Sheng.

Zhai Sheng had intended to refuse, but seeing that Qiao Nan had taken a bite of it, he quietly took a step forward, took Qiao Nan’s hand in his, and took a bite of the pickle. “It’s alright.” He lied.

Zhai Yaohui, who had walked out and witnessed the scene, warned Zhai Sheng with his gaze. They were both men. Could Zhai Yaohui possibly not understand his son? Thankfully, his son cherished his daughter-in-law greatly. This meant that the couple had a good relationship and that his son was happy in this marriage. As such, Zhai Yaohui was pleased. There was nothing more important than his children’s happiness. “Nan Nan, how’s the taste? Why don’t I get the auntie to learn how to make this? We can’t possibly trouble your dad to make this all the time.”

Qiao Dongliang was a rather contradictory person. He treated Qiao Zijin well in one moment and treated Qiao Nan well in the next. Others might not understand Qiao Dongliang, but Zhai Yaohui felt that he could understand him to a certain extent. There was no doubt that Qiao Dongliang wanted to be a good father to both his daughters.

Besides, the Chinese had a saying that one could hardly be the head of a family unless one allowed his successors to make mistakes.

It was inevitable for people to want to mediate differences even at the expense of one's principles and morals. What Qiao Dongliang had done wrong was that he had not made his limits clear and he himself was not even clear of them.

It was exactly because of Qiao Dongliang's confusion that he had never become a 'good' father in his daughters' eyes, even though he had tried his best to do so. The contradiction was indeed confusing.

"Alright, I'll let auntie try it later." After tasting Qiao Dongliang's authentic product and then being forced to eat the auntie's counterfeit product made Qiao Nan feel rather miserable. It would be best if the auntie learned it well.

Chapter 2085: The Same

Even though Qiao Dongliang had already said that pickled ginger was simple to make and it did not cost him much to send it over, Qiao Nan did not want to trouble Qiao Dongliang all the time.

Pickled ginger had become a new favorite of Qiao Nan, and after their auntie tried making it once, Qiao Nan declared that it was not sour or fermented enough. The moment Miao Jing bit into it, she felt as though her denture had broken. Of course, no one in the Zhai family other than Qiao Nan dared to even touch it. Even the only other woman, Miao Jing, stayed away from it.

"It's good that Nan Nan likes to eat it." Miao Jing thought that it did not smell bad. Quite on the contrary, it was rather fragrant. But she could not understand why its taste did not reflect its fragrance. She could not even swallow the pickled ginger that the auntie had made, much less Qiao Dongliang's.

Thinking about that, Miao Jing eyed her son and questioned through her gaze whether he was still alright even after eating that pickled ginger and whether she should call an ambulance for him.

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Zhai Sheng pursed his thin lips. As a soldier, he had gone through all kinds of trials and tribulations. There was nothing he could not eat, no matter how much he hated it.

Zhai Sheng would not allow himself to be embarrassed by being sent to the hospital for a mere slice of pickled ginger. “That’s enough. You’ve already had a bowl of congee. If you want more, have it at dinner or supper.”

Zhai Sheng pampered and loved Qiao Nan very much but he controlled her strictly as well. It was a fermented product, after all, and it was just meant to whet Qiao Nan’s appetite. Zhai Sheng was afraid that it would be bad for her health if she were to have too much of it.

Thankfully, Qiao Nan was obedient. Even though she was pregnant, she was not excessively demanding or stubborn. Now that she had satisfied her cravings, Qiao Nan was rather pleased. The moment Zhai Sheng said that, Qiao Nan put her chopsticks down. “I’ve had enough for the day. I’ll have it again tomorrow.”

Miao Jing was the most pleased seeing Qiao Nan being so cooperative. “Nan Nan’s a good child and the baby in Nan Nan’s stomach is even more obedient. This child’s not demanding and has never troubled Nan Nan either.”

If the baby in Qiao Nan’s stomach were to cause any trouble, the ones who would suffer would definitely be those around Qiao Nan. It was fortunate that Qiao Nan had not changed much even after getting pregnant. Miao Jing stubbornly believed that that was because her grandchild was an obedient child who cared about his or her elders. That was why the baby was so obedient.

This child had arrived a little late, but the whole family was willing to wait for such an obedient child no matter how late it would arrive.

However, the good atmosphere in the Zhai family did not mean that the same happened in other families. The Feng family was not the only one making a din, especially the Qiao family in Ping Cheng. It was truly rare for them to be living harmoniously and calmly.

Seeing that Qiao Dongliang had just sent a parcel to Qiao Nan and had not even thrown away the delivery slip before he had started on the next batch of pickled ginger for Qiao Nan, Qiao Zijin was upset. “Dad, do you know how strong the smell of pickled ginger is? It’s so sour and spicy. You’re not the only one living here. Can’t you go somewhere else to make this? Mom and I can’t stand this smell.”

It was just a pregnancy. It was not as though she was the only one who had been pregnant before. Not only had Qiao Zijin given birth, but her son was also all grown up. Qiao Nan had gotten

married to Zhai Sheng and the Zhai family would probably only be interested in having a boy. She would see how well Qiao Nan would live her life once she gave birth to a girl instead of a boy.

Not everyone could be as capable as her and give birth to a son on her first try.

Ding Jiayi, whose name had been mentioned, grabbed a handful of melon seeds without turning back to look at them. “Don’t bring me into the equation. I’ve already gotten used to this smell a long time ago.” Had she not smelled enough oil, salt, vinegar, and soy sauce throughout her marriage? If she had been intolerant of the smell of vinegar, who would have cooked for the family all these years? What kind of daughter-in-law could not stand the smell of vinegar?

“...” Qiao Zijin was embarrassed and uneasy that her ally had betrayed her.

Qiao Dongliang’s answer was even more impolite. “You can’t stand it? Why don’t you leave the house and take a stroll outside? This is my house and you’re living under my roof. You can’t afford to be so picky. If you can’t get used to it, you can purchase a house for yourself.”

Ever since that incident, the atmosphere in the Qiao family had become rather strange. After Qiao Dongliang decided to separate from Ding Jiayi, he had indeed done so. From then on, he had only taken care of his own meals.

After being provoked by that meal, Ding Jiayi seemed to have gotten clearer in her mind or even more confused, following in Qiao Dongliang’s footsteps. At mealtimes, she would only prepare her own meals, not caring about Qiao Zijin anymore.

Qiao Zijin had never expected things to end up in such a state. Because she had eaten late at night the previous night, she had not been hungry when she awoke the next morning. As such, she had not thrown a tantrum when she had not seen her breakfast ready. She was not hungry yet, anyway.

But when lunchtime came and Qiao Zijin saw that her parents took care of only their own meals while no one had cared about hers, she could not help but ask, “Mom, where’s my lunch?” She had not eaten yet. Besides, how could her mom not call her when she was about to have her lunch?

Qiao Zijin had stayed in her room, playing games or reading her novels. When she had gotten hungry and finally emerged from the room, she happened to see Ding Jiayi cleaning up the dishes.

After Ding Jiayi finished washing up, she shook off the water on her hands. “You should just settle your lunch like how you settled your dinner last night.”

Qiao Zijin was stunned. “Mom, are you asking me to order takeaway? Why couldn’t you just call me while you were eating?” Takeaways were indeed delicious but they were expensive when compared to meals cooked by her parents. Because she had already had takeaway once the previous night, she had not intended to call for takeaways again that week.

After wiping her hands dry, Ding Jiayi sat down, switched on the television, and ate the melon seeds that she had purchased. “Did you call me when you ordered takeaway last night?”

Qiao Zijin was both awkward and angry at the same time. “Mom... You were throwing a tantrum last night. You were upset, so I didn’t want to disturb you.” Qiao Zijin could not wrap her head around the situation. Her mom had been after her for a hundred thousand yuan last night. That was why she had not bothered to ask her about dinner. Would her mom continue with her nonsense as long as she did not hand over the hundred thousand yuan?

Because it concerned her interests, even if it was just a meal, Ding Jiayi had been hurt by Qiao Zijin’s actions. “You were playing your games or reading your novels in the room, so I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“You could have left some food for me, at the very least!”

Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Zijin coldly, using Qiao Zijin’s words against her. She had not seen Qiao Zijin leave any food for her the previous night either.

Chapter 2086: Throwing a Tantrum

With Ding Jiayi eyeing her in that manner, Qiao Zijin realized in dismay that her mom’s anger had not subsided. In fact, she had become even more stubborn and upset because of her meal last night.

“Mom, don’t get mad. I’ll just apologize to you. I’m sorry for being too confused last night because I was too hungry. I remembered it wrongly. I thought you’d eaten.” It was just a meal. Her mom was usually the one who prepared the meals in the family. Even though she had not ordered takeaway for her mother, it would take no more than a few minutes for her mother to whip up a meal for herself.

It was such a simple matter. Qiao Zijin could not understand why her mom was upset over it, so much so that she had not prepared lunch for her today.

Ding Jiayi might be less intelligent than Qiao Zijin, but she was not entirely a fool. Qiao Zijin had said that she had forgotten and had then said that she thought that Ding Jiayi had already eaten in the next moment. Ding Jiayi was certain that these were all excuses.

If she had really eaten, would she have ignored her daughter, Qiao Zijin, and let her order takeaway for herself?

“There’s no need to apologize to me. I’m already seventy. I’m not even complaining that you don’t prepare my meals for me. There’s no reason for me to act as your servant. I can save myself some effort by not preparing meals for you. Zijin, your dad was right about one thing. It’s about time for you to be filial toward your dad and me. Your dad and I are already in our seventies. Even if you don’t take care of us, you can’t possibly expect us to keep taking care of you, right? Alright. Go make yourself some food. Otherwise, call for some takeaway.”

Within a day, Qiao Zijin had suffered two big blows. No matter how well Ding Jiayi treated Qiao Zijin, she would still get angry. The mother and daughter were practically from the same mold. If they had a common target and did not hurt each other in the process of hurting someone else, neither of them would think that they were doing anything wrong.

However, if such heartless schemes happened to them and their interests were concerned, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin’s hearts would be as fragile as glass. A single injury would stay in their memories for a very long time.

Qiao Zijin could treat Qiao Nan coldly and could plot against Qiao Nan and scheme to get hold of her money, but Qiao Nan could not treat Ding Jiayi in that manner because Ding Jiayi would not allow it to happen. Now, Qiao Zijin was being unfilial to her mom and was even ignoring her mother!

In the past, Ding Jiayi would have said that she had only one daughter, Qiao Zijin, and that only Qiao Zijin would be filial to her and support her in her old age. But after that incident, Ding Jiayi completely forgot about her words in the past and declared that Qiao Zijin was no filial child either.

Just like now, Ding Jiayi could not even be bothered about preparing a meal for Qiao Zijin. Even though Qiao Zijin had apologized to her, Ding Jiayi did not even move an inch. She knew that Qiao Zijin had only asked for lunch because she had been starving. But now, Ding Jiayi was already relaxing and was in no mood to prepare even a simple meal for Qiao Zijin.

Had Qiao Zijin not refused to give her a hundred thousand yuan for her and Old Qiao? Fine. Then, Qiao Zijin should be prepared to settle her own meals in the future. Everything in life concerned money and she was not even employed.

At this moment, Ding Jiayi could not help but be thankful that Qiao Dongliang had been hospitalized and that she had been able to get fifty thousand yuan from her two daughters. After Qiao Dongliang had been discharged, they had not spent all of Qiao Nan's fifty thousand yuan yet, and as such, Ding Jiayi had about seventy thousand yuan on hand after taking everything into account.

With this seventy thousand yuan and thinking about her expenses, Ding Jiayi knew that she would not starve to death even without a two-thousand-yuan monthly allowance. She did not need to buy new clothes, much less cosmetic products like Qiao Zijin. As long as she cut down on her expenses on food, she would not spend much at all.

Besides, she had a daughter, after all. She did not believe that Qiao Nan would leave her in the lurch if she really lacked clothes to wear or food to eat. Qiao Nan had changed. Ding Jiayi knew that but refused to admit it.

Ding Jiayi had already guessed that Qiao Nan would never agree to her more ridiculous demands, but she could not help but want to test it out. More importantly, she would test Qiao Nan's limits and see how tolerant Qiao Nan was of her mother after undergoing such a drastic change.

Unfortunately, there was no way of comparing her with the Qiao Nan of the past. Qiao Nan had no tolerance toward her anymore.

Whether Qiao Nan acceded to her unreasonable requests would all depend on Qiao Nan's mood. However, Qiao Nan would never refuse to help her out if she had normal requests like getting money to buy clothes or daily necessities. When Old Qiao had been hospitalized the previous time and when her health had deteriorated, Qiao Nan had not left them in the lurch and had given them money to tide through that period.

Now that she had fallen out with Qiao Zijin, the only one Ding Jiayi had the guts to throw a tantrum at was Qiao Nan. This truth was like rubbing salt in her already hurting wound.

All along, she had always said that the only daughter who would be filial to her and support her was Qiao Zijin. Qiao Nan, whom she had always looked down on, had made it in life, while the elder daughter, whom she had doted on all along, had started to rebel against her. How could Ding Jiayi possibly accept such a brutal reality?

Seeing Ding Jiayi's attitude, Qiao Zijin was sure that Ding Jiayi was serious this time. All along, it had only been Qiao Zijin throwing tantrums at Ding Jiayi for not settling matters properly. It was rare for the situation to be reversed and for Ding Jiayi to be angry at Qiao Zijin.

Qiao Zijin, who was used to being pampered, was not at all worried. The previous day, she had already had the intention of letting Ding Jiayi cool down for a few days. Now, she thought that that was even more so necessary.

She could not afford to pamper or give in to her mom. Her mom's temper had become as bad as a princess' because her dad and Qiao Nan had always given in to her in the past. Those two people had been utter fools. She would definitely not do the same and give in to her mom. She was already so advanced in age and yet, she was expecting others to coax her as though she was the empress. That made no sense at all.

If her mom would not make her meals, then so be it. She still had 1.5 million yuan. Would she starve to death?

To prove that she had a spine, she would never forgive Ding Jiayi this time unless Ding Jiayi took the initiative to apologize to her. From that meal onward, Qiao Zijin started to call for takeaway instead of waiting for Ding Jiayi to settle her meals. With 1.5 million yuan in her bank, she could well afford takeaways.

Day after day, and week after week, Qiao Zijin had made her stand clear as day.

Chapter 2087: Relented

She threw such a huge tantrum that she was reluctant to even address Ding Jiayi as mom, so as to prove to Ding Jiayi that she was very serious this time.

But just a week later, Qiao Zijin could no longer swallow takeaway food any longer. No matter how delicious it was, eating takeaway three times a day made for twenty-one meals a week. People often said that a lot of oil and seasoning went into takeaway food and it was detrimental to the body. Besides, having takeaway for all three meals a day for a whole week cost her quite a significant sum.

Thinking about the money she had spent on takeaway alone this week, Qiao Zijin was a little appalled. A meal cost at least fifty yuan, even going up to a hundred over yuan at times. As such, she spent no less than two hundred yuan every day on her meals alone. In a mere week's time, she had already spent a thousand six hundred yuan!

There were a little over four weeks in a month, and with the way she was spending, she would have to spend almost six to seven thousand yuan on takeaways alone every month!

If she were to find a job now, it would already be very good if she were to be able to find a job paying her four to five thousand yuan a month. But what would she do about her other expenses if she spent six to seven thousand yuan on her meals alone? Besides, she had not yet found a job with a salary of four to five thousand yuan. This meant that she had only expenses with no income..

Even if she did have more than a million yuan, she could not possibly spend all of that on takeaways! What would she do for the rest of her life, then? What would she do about her rich and interesting life?

Qiao Zijin was much more willing to spend her money on makeup rather than on food. If not for the fact that Qiao Zijin rarely went out to nightclubs nowadays, her expenses would be even higher.

But she had done some basic calculations. In a year, she would spend a good seventy thousand yuan on takeaway alone! In ten years, that would be seven hundred thousand, and that did not even take into account inflation! In that way, a sum of 1.5 million yuan would only supply her with twenty years' worth of takeaway.

Qiao Zijin was on the verge of a breakdown.

While she had been married to Chen Jun, Qiao Zijin had never needed to worry about her expenses although she had not been in charge of the finances. But that did not mean that she was unaware of the fact that the family needed to pay for electricity bills, water bills, and utility bills apart from paying for food.

Now that her parents were still alive, they would still be able to take care of all these bills. But in twenty years' time, her parents might not be alive while she would definitely still be alive. She could not possibly depend on Qiao Nan to pay for her utility bills. No. There was no way Qiao Nan would care about her. That wretched girl, Qiao Nan, had an evil heart. No matter how well she lived her own life, she would never take pity on her poor sister who was a divorcée.

Qiao Zijin, who never ever used her brains otherwise, had no other choice but to give in to Ding Jiayi this time, no matter how arrogant she had been in the past. "Mom, it's been a week. Are you still angry at me? Mom, don't be angry at me. If you're really upset, you can scold me or even hit me. It's bad for your health to be angry all the time. Mom..."

Ding Jiayi retracted her hand from Qiao Zijin's hold. "Your calculator was rather loud just now. My elder daughter is rich indeed. You wanted me to use the ten thousand yuan that you gave me last time to pay for your expenses for an entire year. No, you wanted me to pay for the entire family's expenses. I'm guessing you finally understand that your week's worth of takeaways cost you more than a tenth of the sum you gave me."

She had to take care of a family of three with a budget of only a thousand yuan a month. In a week alone, Zijin had spent a thousand six hundred yuan on takeaways! Of course, there was no way Ding Jiayi's anger would subside upon finding out about this information. On the contrary, her anger toward Qiao Zijin only grew.

But Qiao Zijin was to be blamed for being a fool. She had bought a calculator that read out the calculations. Knowing that Qiao Zijin was doing her sums, Ding Jiayi had turned down the volume of the television out of curiosity. Then, she had heard the sum of a thousand six hundred and thirty yuan and fifty cents being read out in a mechanical voice.

Qiao Zijin stiffened. "Mom, that's different. I was never one to live in that way since I was young. How could I compare to your ability to scrimp and save? It's because of you that our family has gotten to where we are now. Otherwise, given my dad's meager salary, how could our family have survived and raised two children? I even managed to graduate from university! Mom, it's all due to your hard work. Mom, I really respect you."

Qiao Zijin seemed to be saying that Qiao Dongliang was incapable of earning money and it was only because of Ding Jiayi that they had managed to survive on that meager sum of money, even managing to send Qiao Zijin to university.

Every time this happened, Qiao Zijin would always praise Ding Jiayi's abilities. That was why Qiao Zijin could spit out such praises so smoothly and glibly.

“Hehehe...” Qiao Dongliang, who had wanted to check on his pickled ginger, happened to hear the conversation. He had unknowingly been ‘arrows’. “I’m indeed incapable as a father. It’s true that it’s all your mom’s effort that you’ve become the way you are today!”

With that, Qiao Dongliang put all his soul into checking on his pickled ginger. That was how his elder daughter, whom he had favored his entire life, viewed him. Yes, both Ding Jiayi and he had ‘good fortune’ indeed. They had raised such a good daughter like Qiao Zijin.

The only thing that comforted Qiao Dongliang was that he had been different from Ding Jiayi and had never asked Qiao Nan to sacrifice her life for Qiao Zijin’s happiness. At the very most, he had simply acted as though he was deaf and mute, allowing Ding Jiayi to take control of the family affairs.

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At the very least, he still thought of Qiao Nan as his biological daughter and would do anything to protect her interests. Even if he were to lose Qiao Zijin as a daughter now, he would not have any troubles in his old age. It was just that Qiao Dongliang felt extremely guilty relying on Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan had left school early to work, and as such, he had only supported Qiao Nan for the first sixteen years of her life. Before Qiao Nan turned twenty, she had been so capable that she had already been earning more than him and had taken over the role as the family’s main breadwinner.

Nan Nan was only forty and he had not even supported her for seventeen years, yet Nan Nan had already supported him for over two decades. And in the future...

What could be even more awkward than catching someone else in the act of speaking ill of himself? Qiao Zijin had wanted to appease Ding Jiayi, but she had never thought that she would offend her father, Qiao Dongliang.

Chapter 2088: You’re Right

Many years of past experience told Qiao Zijin that her happiness in the next lifetime depended fully on Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi. As long as her parents were on her side, no matter how much Qiao Nan resisted, Qiao Nan would never be able to escape from doing all the hard work to benefit her, the sister.

In this matter, both of them had to be on her side. It wouldn't do if there was only one of them.

See? Because her dad had turned against her, Qiao Nan was no longer as easy to control as before. She even dared to escape and marry Zhai Sheng privately without their family's consent. Upon thinking about Zhai Sheng, her brother-in-law, apart from the time Qiao Dongliang was hospitalized, she never got to see him again.

Thinking about this, Qiao Zijin couldn't help but suspect if Qiao Nan was worried that she would snatch Zhai Sheng over like how she snatched Chen Jun back then. As such, Qiao Nan always guarded against her and didn't let her meet him. Even on the day of their marriage, Qiao Nan was so scared that she didn't dare let her attend their wedding.

Pulling back the thoughts that were far away, she could tell that Qiao Dongliang was really angry at her now. Qiao Zijin wanted to coax him as well. The problem was that both parents were angry with her now. It couldn't be like the past anymore, wherein one helped her coax the other who was angry.

Comparing Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi, the former was much less important than the latter. After thinking for a while, Qiao Zijin insisted on sitting next to Ding Jiayi and continuing to coax her. After coaxing Ding Jiayi, Qiao Zijin knew that Ding Jiayi would help her coax Qiao Dongliang. Conversely, if she coaxed Qiao Dongliang first, he might not help her coax Ding Jiayi together.

If her mom saw that she coaxed her dad first, she might even be angrier and become more difficult to coax.

"Mom, look. You're angry with me. Could it be that you can't feel the sincerity of my apology? Mom, you should know that in my heart, you're the most important." Qiao Zijin's kind words were as sweet as sugar. She kept throwing them on Ding Jiayi like they were free.

In the past, Ding Jiayi fell for Qiao Zijin's words the most. What was strange was that they weren't working today. Ding Jiayi looked at the TV. After glancing at Qiao Zijin, she said, "Forget it. You're the closest to me? You know clearly in your heart who or what you're closest to."

What was the use of her saying that they were close? She liked money and even got quite a lot of money from that wretched girl, Qiao Nan. However, in the end, she didn't spend any money on her own. She saved all of it and helped Zijin buy a house so that she could have a dowry and stand upright in front of the Chen family.

Compared to money, she found Zijin, her daughter, to be more important.

Sadly, Zijin didn't seem to treat her the same way. She said they were close. In reality, when it came to money, Zijin would change and even throw temper at her, saying that she regarded her as an ATM like Qiao Nan and only knew how to ask her daughters for money.

With a clear conscience, she treated that wretched girl that way but not to Zijin. If Qiao Nan was a wretched girl, Zijin was a bad child without any conscience!

Ding Jiayi was only short of saying explicitly that Qiao Zijin wasn't close to anyone else other than money.

Qiao Zijin felt a headache as well. The more she felt the pinch, the more her mother wasn't willing to give up the issue of money easily. There was no choice. Qiao Zijin was really reluctant to fork out money.

Mothers didn't develop enmity with daughters overnight. After all, she wasn't trying to coax her mother over one or two thousand yuan but one hundred thousand yuan. As such, Qiao Zijin changed her style of doing things. She ordered takeaway. However, this time, not only did she order takeaway before Ding Jiayi prepared dinner, but she also ordered Ding Jiayi's share so that she could pull Ding Jiayi along to eat together.

Qiao Zijin thought it clearly and wanted to resolve this issue of a meal first. All the issues arose because of the takeaway. Naturally, it would take takeaways to resolve these issues. Her only motive now was to appease her mother so that she would be willing to continue providing for her three meals daily.

Giving up a small amount of money was to save a bigger amount of money.

Qiao Zijin had ordered takeaways for three days consecutively. For these three days, she always pulled Ding Jiayi along to eat with her. Not only was the food she ordered slightly expensive, but they were also Ding Jiayi's favorite.

In just three days, she had spent nearly a thousand yuan. Qiao Zijin's heart was bleeding. "Mom, are we ordering takeaway tomorrow as well? I'm a little sick of eating like this every day." Her mother's dishes weren't as delicious as takeaway food. However, the crucial thing here was less money was spent. Not only was it lesser, but she also didn't have to fork out any money!

After eating, Ding Jiayi poured herself a cup of tea. “You’re not ordering takeaway tomorrow?”

“Yes...” Qiao Zijin looked at Ding Jiayi’s face carefully. “I have such thoughts. After eating, I realized that takeaway food isn’t as healthy and delicious as home-cooked food. Mom, what do you think?”

Ding Jiayi flossed her teeth. “Sure. You’re the one who has been ordering takeaways. Of course, it’s up to you to decide if you want to order takeaways for tomorrow. So be it if you’re not ordering.” For three days, not only did she not have to cook, but she also didn’t need to wash the dishes. Yes, this feeling was good.

Quite a bit of money was spent. However, undeniably, the money spent was worthwhile.

Hearing that Ding Jiayi agreed to this, Qiao Zijin was extremely happy. The storm was over.

This time, Qiao Zijin argued with Ding Jiayi twice. Qiao Zijin only wanted to fix the second issue they were arguing over. She wanted to fight for the right to have meals at home so that she didn’t need to spend money on takeaways. As for the first issue they were arguing over, Qiao Zijin chose to selectively forget it.

It was good that they reconciled. As to what they reconciled over and what they were still arguing about, she didn’t care. After the matter was over for half a month, her mother shouldn’t remember it anymore.

It was just that Qiao Zijin realized she had thought of the matter too simply when they were eating. She thought that her mother was a simple-minded person. If she wasn’t simple-minded, would she have been able to coax her so well in the past?

Unexpectedly, after Ding Jiayi calmed down, she was still quite intelligent in front of Qiao Zijin.

Seeing the pitiful dishes on the table, Qiao Zijin was a little unhappy. There were so few dishes. They weren’t enough for even her half a bowl of rice. It was just that she had just reconciled with her mother. If she became impolite with her words now, it could be said that the one thousand yuan she spent on takeaways in the past was spent in vain.

As such, Qiao Zijin suppressed her anger and smiled. “Mom, prepare more dishes for the next meal. Actually, when we are eating, we can have more dishes and lesser rice. The nutrition is all in the dishes.”

After hearing Qiao Zijin’s words, Ding Jiayi smiled. “Perhaps you’re right.”

Chapter 2089: Improvement

“I do this as well. More dishes, less rice.” As she said this, Ding Jiayi took two big mouthfuls of the pitiful dishes on the plates before taking a small bite of rice.

The dishes on the plates were eaten clean in no time. Only a bit of soup was left.

Qiao Zijin was completely stunned. “Mom, you... Why did you eat all the dishes?”

“Didn’t you tell me to eat more dishes?” Wow. The dishes were delicious. She was full as well.

Qiao Zijin was speechless. She took a deep breath and said, “Mom, you ate all the dishes. Then, what will I eat?” She couldn’t possibly just eat white rice, right? “Mom, did you keep some dishes for me inside?” In the past, her mother used to do so. She would leave the freshest, more expensive, and best parts of the dishes out for her to eat alone.

Ding Jiayi stood up and cleared the table. “No. Didn’t I tell you last month that from now on, the three people in our family will just take care of themselves? Zijin, don’t worry. Between the two daughters, I only treat you as my precious. When Qiao Nan was at home in the past, she did all the household chores. You’re my precious. Of course, I can’t get you to do so. Your only task is to take care of yourself.”

She looked down on her next-door neighbor. After the ugly episode previously, her neighbor’s daughter similarly couldn’t become a civil servant. What was there for her to be proud that her daughter was a university student and that she learned better than Zijin?

However, what she felt upset over was that when Ding Jiayi headed out, she saw not only once that her neighbor’s daughter accompanied her neighbor to buy groceries in the morning. She even heard the mother-daughter pair laughing. The daughter mentioned that she had learned a new dish recently and would cook for her parents when she went back.

At that time, her neighbor disagreed. "I'm at home. For things like cooking, how could I let you, a university student, do it? You still have to find a job. How tough is that? Let Mom take care of all the cooking."

The daughter disagreed. "Household chores are tough too. You usually take care of me and Dad. It's tiring. I'm just finding a job now. I haven't gone to work yet and am free now. Since it's rare that I'm free, you must try my dishes. You can give yourself a break from cooking as well. After I've found a job and go to work, even if you want me to help or try my dishes, I can most probably only do so on the weekends."

After seeing daughters from other families, Ding Jiayi learned how to differentiate between what was true and what was false.

Ding Jiayi couldn't help but compare this girl with both her daughters. Her elder daughter, Qiao Zijin, was much sweeter with her words than this girl. She could always coax her well. It was just that Qiao Zijin only had the skills to sweet-talk. Thinking back about her actual behavior, there was nothing.

Qiao Nan... Qiao Nan never said anything. However, as long as Qiao Nan was at home, she would always feel most relaxed. She didn't even need to buy the dishes. She headed out just to chat with her neighbors. She didn't need to share anything as well. Qiao Nan seemed to know what she was thinking and would always prepare everything she wanted nicely before she even said anything.

Comparing all three daughters together, Ding Jiayi didn't know if her daughters were good or her neighbor's daughter was better. What she could think of was that if Qiao Zijin and Qiao Nan could become a daughter, where this daughter was as sweet with words as Qiao Zijin and as filial and capable as Qiao Nan, then this daughter she gave birth to would be the most perfect daughter in this world.

Ding Jiayi, who only wished for her daughter to be the most perfect daughter, forgot that not only was she not a perfect mother, but she couldn't even compare to ordinary mothers.

However, after seeing her neighbor's daughter, she didn't feel she was worse off than her neighbor. Indeed, the neighbor's daughter was not bad. However, aside from Qiao Nan being not as sweet with words, in terms of filial piety, her neighbor's daughter couldn't compare to Qiao Nan at all. As such, because of Qiao Nan, she had won against her neighbor. They had both given birth to daughters, but her neighbor didn't have as good a daughter as her.

Ding Jiayi's feelings toward Qiao Nan had changed. When she thought of Qiao Zijin again, the feelings of comparison were obvious.

She already didn't expect to have a meal cooked by Qiao Zijin, but who knew that Qiao Zijin was lazy to such an extent? She wasn't even willing to cook herself a meal and just wholeheartedly waited for Ding Jiayi to cook for her. Ding Jiayi was unhappy.

Where was the promised filial piety?

Ding Jiayi was angry over a takeaway meal. When Qiao Zijin called Ding Jiayi to eat together, Ding Jiayi was initially unwilling and wanted to refuse. However, she thought of how she had raised Qiao Zijin up and supported her in university until she was married.

She was really good to Qiao Zijin, but there's a huge disparity between Qiao Zijin's words and actions. Similarly, she didn't feel the filial piety she had promised earlier. Now that Qiao Zijin just made a phone call to order takeaways, why shouldn't she eat? On what basis should she not eat?

Qiao Zijin just wanted to feed herself. She was just there to take a few mouthfuls as well. Was it too overboard? It wasn't. As such, she should eat!

They had only eaten for three days. Before Ding Jiayi's heart softened, Qiao Zijin couldn't help but mention about no longer ordering takeaways but eating at home instead. Great. Qiao Zijin had really spent one thousand yuan on takeaways for the past three days for nothing.

Qiao Dongliang shared these matters with Qiao Nan as a joke. Firstly, he hoped that after Qiao Nan knew about these, she would be appeased and become less resentful toward the Qiao family. Secondly, he treated Qiao Nan as his daughter and a daughter of the Qiao family. He hoped that after knowing about the Qiao family's matters, Qiao Nan would slowly let go of the grudges in her heart and truly regard the Qiao family as a family again.

Qiao Nan could feel Qiao Dongliang's 'good intentions'. However, she didn't want to agree with it. "No pain, no gain. Qiao Zijin is really pampered. As such, someone has to suffer."

Qiao Zijin was already long used to just using her mouth and Ding Jiayi would bring over all the good things in this world to her. Ding Jiayi was announcing to everyone that not only did she value Qiao Zijin the most but that Qiao Zijin was also the best child in the world.

Now, only practical actions could prove Qiao Zijin's 'filial piety'. How would she be able to control her true inner world when she hadn't adapted to such a change? Of course, compared to just using words in the past, it was already a considerable improvement that Qiao Zijin spent one thousand yuan this time.

Chapter 2090: A Visitor

Qiao Nan knew that Ding Jiayi must have been upset about spending a thousand yuan on three days' worth of takeaways. In fact, these three days of takeaways must have been a torture to her.

Zhai Sheng massaged Qiao Nan's waist. It went without saying that pregnant women had it the hardest on their waists and hips. Zhai Sheng was worried that he would not be around when Qiao Nan entered the later stages of pregnancy, and as such, he made use of the time he had now to care more about her. "You still can't stop thinking about the Qiao family?"

Qiao Nan sighed as she relaxed her brows, clearly enjoying Zhai Sheng's massage. "It's not that I can't let it go. It's that my dad won't let me forget about it. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin have started a war between them and my dad is trying to let me know that the two of them haven't been living a good life and that they're being punished for the evil deeds they committed against me in the past so that my anger will subside."

Cool down?

Qiao Nan was not sure about that, but she did indeed feel a little better. Qiao Zijin had been raised and pampered by Ding Jiayi.. Now that she was experiencing it for herself, it was truly retribution!

Ding Jiayi always scolded her, calling her a wretched girl who had no conscience. But with Qiao Zijin around, Qiao Nan did not think that she had any right to claim those two titles. "I understand my dad's intentions but I doubt he'll ever understand mine. It's easy to talk about repaying kindness with evil but it's hard to actually go through with it. I have a clear conscience toward the Qiao family."

Even though Qiao Zijin had toed the line of life and death after contracting uremia, she had never felt that her decision to abandon her family had been a crime. It was true that she had two kidneys and could afford to donate one to Qiao Zijin, but whether she was willing to do so was another matter altogether.

She had already done enough for Qiao Zijin, so why should she donate a kidney to Qiao Zijin? Without her, would Qiao Zijin die? If that was the case, then who was the one alive right now?

Without the money that she had given her family all these years, Qiao Zijin would never have had a house to sell. Even now, it was because of Qiao Nan that Qiao Zijin was living such a comfortable life!

Did her dad still want her to care for Qiao Zijin for the rest of her life? That was impossible. Supporting her parents was her obligation, but she was not obliged to support her siblings at all.

“...” Zhai Sheng frowned. He had read everything that Qiao Dongliang had sent. “Not a very smart person.” The person that Zhai Sheng was talking about was, of course, Qiao Zijin, and not Qiao Dongliang. Even though Qiao Nan had thrown a tantrum at Qiao Dongliang, he was still Qiao Nan’s father, after all, and Zhai Sheng had insisted on marrying Qiao Nan.

A son-in-law could not possibly scold his father-in-law.

“It’s normal.” Qiao Nan’s mood had improved significantly after Zhai Sheng’s massage. “She has never been very smart. Those who try to act smart can never compare to the ones who are actually smart. I don’t know why Ding Jiayi has been so obsessed with her since she was young. She thought that Qiao Zijin would definitely make a name for herself and would have an unbridled future. She even thought that Qiao Zijin would be so outstanding that ten sons wouldn’t even match up to Qiao Zijin.”

Qiao Nan knew that Ding Jiayi’s persistence in this regard was all due to the Ding family. Her paternal grandparents had passed on early while her maternal grandparents’ family was still alive. Unfortunately, they had never had much contact. Ding Jiayi had always been holding it in, trying to prove to her family that she was right, and she was even waiting for the Ding family to come crying and apologizing to her before she agreed to return.

From what her father had told her, the Ding family was just as stubborn. They had announced that Ding Jiayi would never be able to live a good life in the future. Qiao Dongliang would rejoice for only a short moment for marrying someone like Ding Jiayi. There would eventually come a day when he would regret his decision.

In fact, Grandma Ding had specifically made a trip down to tell Qiao Dongliang that on the day of his marriage to Ding Jiayi. Perhaps it was the car accident that had evoked her memories. In her dream, Qiao Nan had forgotten about the existence of the Ding family.

After waking up from her dream, Qiao Nan had started to remember quite a few details about the Ding family.

Because Grandma Ding had gone down on that particular day, only Grandma Ding and Qiao Dongliang had been present. Even though Qiao Dongliang knew that Ding Jiayi had fallen out with her family by insisting on marrying him, he had never imagined that his mother-in-law would be so evil with her words and curse her daughter's marriage from the very first day. Of course, Qiao Dongliang had been infuriated at that time.

It could be said that Qiao Dongliang had trusted Ding Jiayi so wholeheartedly and had treated her so well, handing over all his earnings to Ding Jiayi and never interfering in Ding Jiayi's treatment of their two daughters, all because of Grandma Ding's words.

At that time, Qiao Dongliang had been extremely gullible. One was a wife whom he was going to live the rest of his life with, who did not even mind that he did not have any family, while the other was a fierce and stern stranger who spoke in a menacing tone. Even a fool would know which to choose between the two.

Qiao Dongliang could not help but try to fill in the blanks himself. The reason that Ding Jiayi had fallen out with her family definitely had to be related to how harshly the Ding family treated Ding Jiayi to the point that Ding Jiayi could no longer stand it and had no other choice but to leave. A man who had no other family left was the only straw Ding Jiayi could clutch on to back then.

Ding Jiayi had suffered badly in the Ding family and had been forced into such a state. Whether it was because he pitied Ding Jiayi or whether it was because of his role as Ding Jiayi's husband, Qiao Dongliang was always willing to give Ding Jiayi respect and trust in their marriage.

Qiao Dongliang had told Qiao Nan about this not to expose their family's dirty laundry but in hopes that Qiao Nan would be more understanding toward her mother. Ding Jiayi must have grown up being influenced by Mother Ding. Although Ding Jiayi was fierce and demanding toward Qiao Nan, she was pitiful as well because she had suffered at the hands of her own mother.

Qiao Nan asked Qiao Dongliang if Ding Jiayi knew about this, and Qiao Dongliang replied that she did not. After Mother Ding had left, Qiao Dongliang had kept mum about Mother Ding's visit and had never mentioned it to Ding Jiayi.

Initially, he had thought that his mother-in-law had come to visit Ding Jiayi to forgive her and give her blessings. After all, there could not be any deep hatred between parents and their children. Nothing was too serious to be unforgivable.